

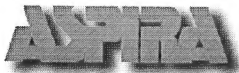


**Strategic Plan of the
ASPIRA Association
1998-2003**

**A Guide to Action for the
ASPIRA Association**

December, 1997

DRAFT



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PREFACE

The Context

As ASPIRA enters the 21st century, it finds itself in a society, and a Puerto Rican and Latino reality, which is fundamentally different from the one in which it was founded almost four decades ago. The globalization of the economy -dominated by extraordinary and rapidly changing technology- have radically transformed the nature of work and the workplace. The knowledge and skills that our youth will need to succeed in this new economy are very different from those that our first *ASPIRANTES* required, and demand profound changes in the education they receive. However, even as knowledge and skills requirements grow exponentially, and when much is said about raising standards and world-class achievement, the educational attainment of Puerto Rican and Latino youth is still among the worst of any group in the country. A significant number of Puerto Rican and Latino youth cannot attain academically at even minimally acceptable levels. Schools are re-segregating and with it, our children are ending up in the poorest schools -schools that lack qualified and committed teachers, high quality educational resources, and the safe, nurturing environment all students need to achieve. Moreover, gangs, violence among youth, drugs, and teen pregnancy, are all on the rise. As a result, the exceedingly drop-out rate, the growing disparities in achievement between Latinos and non-Latinos, the stagnant college participation and graduation rates all remain unabated.

In many of our Puerto Rican and Latino communities, as well as in communities in Puerto Rico, economic development has seriously lagged. Conditions for many Puerto Ricans in U.S. cities, even after almost 50 years, have worsened rather than improved, and the economic gap is widening rather than narrowing. Poverty and despair in our inner city communities is pervasive, and with it, our people lack a decent education, housing, access to health care and, above all, hope. The purchasing power of the Latino community today exceeds \$300 billion, but our low-income communities have failed to

benefit from this power, as money leaves the community, rather than being invested in the community.

Political realities have also changed drastically, deeply affecting social and economic policies that are already having a dramatic impact on our communities. Equity and inclusion are no longer viewed by a growing number of Americans as a legitimate rationale for social intervention, threatening programs that we had taken for granted and which have been critical to whatever little progress we have made, such as Affirmative Action, Bilingual Education and social assistance. Racism is on the rise, and Latinos have been affected dramatically by a growing anti-immigrant sentiment.

The demographics in and outside our communities in the U.S. have also changed dramatically. In our communities, we now have a second, third and even fourth generation of Puerto Ricans and Latinos -born and raised in our cities- who have very different values and who face a host of very different challenges, than those of the 50's, 60's and 70's. The Latino community has grown significantly in numbers and, more importantly, it has become increasingly diverse in a mix of people of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, Central and South American and Dominican descent. This new mix of Latinos -of a growing numbers of Latinos with different cultural, historical and economic backgrounds- challenges our traditional notions of community, culture, and of solutions to our community problems.

And, as with the economy, politics, and our communities, our community organizations have also changed. ASPIRA, which has at times struggled to survive over the years, now has almost four decades of organizational development, experience and history on which to build. It has an extensive organizational infrastructure, thousands of *ASPIRANTES* it has served and considerable influence, visibility and respect in cities where we operate. Moreover, it has national presence -and a national responsibility. ASPIRA has become one of the main Puerto Rican -in fact, one of the main Latino national organizations in the country. More than an organization, **ASPIRA has become a national movement.** It has the national prestige and recognition -within and outside our communities in each of it states, as well as nationally- that few other Latino organizations enjoy. With it, and through its decades of strong advocacy for our youth, it has gained power and influence to shape policy and to secure funding.

In this drastically new and constantly changing context -the new economic and political realities, the condition of the Puerto Rican and Latino community, and our own organizational capabilities- it is more important than ever before that ASPIRA, as an Association, revisit its purpose and mission. It is critical that we engage in an Association-wide process of self analysis and that it set the goals, objectives, and program strategies, to ensure that ASPIRA remains a viable, effective instrument for furthering the social and economic development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community. It is imperative that it have a clear vision, a strategic direction and long and short-term approaches to guide our efforts.

This Strategic Plan is an effort by the ASPIRA Association to set the direction it will take into the 21st century and beyond.

A Plan for the ASPIRA Association

Strategic planning has consistently been a major part of ASPIRA's practice and management since its inception over 36 years ago. Conscious of the constant changes that occur within the Puerto Rican and Latino community, of the needs of the youth that ASPIRA serves, as well as of changes in the external funding and public policy environment, each ASPIRA Associate and the ASPIRA National Office, have consistently invested a significant amount of time and effort in analyzing its environment, reviewing its effectiveness, and identifying goals, objectives and strategies to best further their mission. This long history of investment in strategic planning accounts, to a large extent, for the effectiveness and continuous growth of the organization and for having the capacity to develop a Strategic Plan such as this one.

While each of the organizations in the ASPIRA Association, including the ASPIRA National Office, has always developed individual strategic and on-going plans over the years, **there has never been a systematic attempt to develop a national strategic plan for the ASPIRA Association as a whole.** The Association had not engaged in developing a plan that, while recognizing the uniqueness, special circumstances, diverse interests, and absolute autonomy of each Associate, would serve to set direction for the *entire* ASPIRA Association and serve as a guide for the planning and development of each of its members.

The Strategic Plan contained herein stems from, and builds on, this long tradition of self-review and planning at ASPIRA. Most importantly, it represents a major new step for ASPIRA as an Association. It is the first attempt in ASPIRA's 36-year history and in the 20-year history of the Association, to develop a *national* plan for the ASPIRA Association as a national organization.

This Strategic Plan collects nearly two years of Association-wide analysis and discussions, led by the National Board of Directors, which involved the Executive Directors and ASPIRA staff and our *ASPIRANTES* at all levels. It was developed in two retreats of the National Board of Directors -dedicated exclusively to strategic planning- held at Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1996 and 1997. After considerable discussion at the Associate level, the Plan was approved by the National Board of Directors at its meeting on _____, 1998.

Basic Premises of the National Planning Process

As the ASPIRA Association engaged in this national strategic planning process, there were two basic premises that were explicitly recognized at the outset and that set the overall framework of this Strategic Plan.

- The ASPIRA Association is a confederation of independent organizations (ASPIRA Associates) that, although united in voluntary association through the ASPIRA Association *Articles of Association*, are autonomous. It is the Board of Directors of each Associate that determines the goals, policies, programs, practices, and organizational structure of the organization, within the general parameters set in the Articles of Association and the By-Laws of the Association.
- Though all ASPIRA Associates share the basic mission, principles and core strategies of ASPIRA for empowering and developing the Puerto Rican and Latino community through the education and leadership development of its youth, each is unique. Each Associate is set within a distinct social, economic and political environment that determines the needs of its youth and the strategies required to attain its mission. Each Associate has a distinct organizational history and organizational structure, and each has an established set of programs, interests and unique capabilities.

Therefore:

- The Strategic Plan for the ASPIRA Association must be the result of the *consensus* of all the ASPIRA Associates, produced through the collective analysis and incorporating the experience and wisdom of all ASPIRA Associates.
- Based on the fundamental principles contained in the ASPIRA Association Articles of Association, the Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association must set forth the overarching vision, direction, and strategies for attaining ASPIRA's overall mission as a national organization. It must incorporate, bring together, and build on, the vision, goals, programs and organizational capabilities of each and all of the ASPIRA Associates, to set the overall direction of the Association. Therefore, *it is not a plan for the each or any of the ASPIRA Associates, nor is it the plan of the ASPIRA National Office.* As such, the Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association is a *general guide* for the Associates in their individual planning and development processes.
- The role of the National Board of Directors in national strategic planning is to bring together the collective thought and experience of the ASPIRA

Associates, and to build an Association-wide consensus regarding the national direction and national goals and strategies of the Association. The role of the National Office is to compile the results of this process and to develop a plan to: a) support the development of each Associate based on the Association's national goals and objectives and each Associate's individual plans; and b) implement strategies that are national in scope to meet the goals of the Association.

Strategic Plan of the ASPIRA Association 1998-2003

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan is a guide for the planning and development of the ASPIRA Association –the ASPIRA Associates and the National Office- for the next five years. It includes the Basic Principles of the Association, the Mission Statement of the organization -as reviewed and reaffirmed by the National Board of Directors- the general Goals for the Association, and a section of Objectives and Initiatives: 1998-2003. The Objectives and Initiatives section is divided into: Major Initiatives: 1998-2003, and a section on Strengthening and Expanding Current Initiatives. Each sub-section includes the overall objectives and the general strategies and activities to be implemented.

As stated above, the purpose of this Strategic Plan is that it serve as a **guide** for ASPIRA Associates. Each ASPIRA Associate must determine the program and organizational direction it will take, the specific initiatives to be implemented over the next five years, as well as its priorities for developing these. Each will base its individual plans on its own circumstances and history, social and economic trends, the needs of their specific communities and of the youth they serve, and on their organizational capacity – including resources available. However, based on a consensus of the Association, the following initiatives provide a general framework within which each Associate will develop their plans and priorities.

The National Board of Directors hopes that this Strategic Plan will be useful to the ASPIRA Associates in developing state-wide and local ASPIRA plans.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

In the review of ASPIRA's mission, the Association has reaffirmed fundamental principles that will guide it into the 21st century.

ASPIRA: An Inclusive Puerto Rican Organization

Over 36 years ago, ASPIRA was founded by Puerto Ricans to foster the development of the Puerto Rican community. Its basic philosophy, vision, programs and services, have deep roots in Puerto Rican culture. Moreover, in its three decades of expansion, ASPIRA has grown mainly in Puerto Rican communities across the country, and for many years, served the Puerto Rican community and Puerto Rican youth almost exclusively.

Over the past several years, however, ASPIRA has expanded its services to other Latino communities and to youth from a broad range of Latino backgrounds. By the mid-1980's ASPIRA formally recognized that it must broaden its scope to serve other Latino communities. This move to expand beyond the Puerto Rican community has helped thousands of non-Puerto Rican Latinos in all ASPIRA states. It has also generated discussion about the fundamental focus of ASPIRA as a service organization. After years of discussion, a consensus has been reached.

The ASPIRA Association reaffirms that it is fundamentally a Puerto Rican organization. Because of its origin, development and culture—having emerged from the Puerto Rican community to serve the Puerto Rican community—as well as because of the persistent needs of our own Puerto Rican youth, it should remain focused on the Puerto Rican community and Puerto Rican youth.

ASPIRA recognizes, however, the needs of other Latino communities and other Latino youth in the states that it serves, and that ASPIRA has a process that can be effective in helping to empower and develop other youth and other Latino communities. Therefore, ASPIRA recognizes that it has a responsibility to other Latino youth and communities, and believes that it must be inclusive. ASPIRA's doors must be open to all Latino youth that can benefit from its programs and services.

Youth and the Development of the Community

The philosophy that determines the goals, objectives and activities of ASPIRA undertaken by the organization rests on the basic premise that Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, as a community, have the collective potential to develop their own human and material resources that will permit them to share in the social, economic and political benefits and responsibilities of the larger society. It is through the empowerment of the Puerto Rican and Latino community that it can develop this potential and that the

community can develop and thrive. Moreover, it is by providing Puerto Rican and Latino youth with access to a quality education and through the development of their leadership, that this potential can be realized.

Hence, ASPIRA reaffirms that the future development and wellbeing of the Puerto Rican and Latino community, rests with its youth and that Puerto Rican and Latino youth must remain at the center of all ASPIRA efforts.

AN ASPIRANTE

It is ASPIRA's purpose to provide for the development of Puerto Rican and Latino youth who

- *Has the skills to succeed academically, both in school and/or in college, as well as in the workplace.*
- *Is committed to service to the community and to be an advocate for the community.*
- *Knows him/herself, is proud and knowledgeable of his/her Puerto Rican and Latino heritage, and is bilingual.*
- *Recognizes and values diversity in his/her community and in society at large.*
- *Is a positive role model for his/her peers and for Puerto Rican and Latino youth.*
- *Has the organizational and leadership skills to lead a productive life and to effectively advance the development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community.*
- *Is knowledgeable about his/her community and is resourceful in drawing on the resources within and outside the community to advance its development.*

The ASPIRA Process

The *ASPIRA Process*, devised over 36 years ago, and refined over decades of working with thousands of youth, sets forth that, to become effective leaders, youth must be aware of themselves -of their current situation and challenges, of their goals and aspirations, and of their potential for success and leadership- and be aware of the community that surrounds them. Once aware, youth must analyze both themselves and their communities, become knowledgeable about them, and be able to propose solutions

Awareness and analysis, however, are not sufficient. Action must follow. Youth must not only be able to chart course of action, but must engage actively in implementing solutions. This is an active process in each of its stages that builds, first and foremost, on self-reliance on what youth can do for themselves first. It is an active process that applies equally to individual development as to social action. In this process, ASPIRA assists, supports and nurtures youth, providing educational opportunities, guidance and validation.

These three basic elements—awareness, analysis and action—are the core of a process that every ASPIRANTE must pursue.

The ASPIRA Association therefore reaffirms its belief that the *ASPIRA Process* of leadership development is central to the full development of leadership of Puerto Rican and Latino youth, and must remain ASPIRA's core strategy.

The ASPIRA Clubs

ASPIRA also reaffirms its belief that the core mechanism for bringing together our youth and for providing them with the opportunity to develop their leadership potential, are the ASPIRA Clubs. The ASPIRA Clubs—organized in schools and led by the youth themselves—have been the center of ASPIRA activities since its inception. They have proven a highly effective way of organizing youth and promoting the development of the personal traits and values, and academic leadership skills that should be expected of each *ASPIRANTE*.

The ASPIRA Association reaffirms that the ASPIRA Clubs are, and will remain, central to all ASPIRA activities, and that promoting and supporting the ASPIRA Clubs will continue to be a core activity of ASPIRA.

MISSION

Based on this philosophy, the ASPIRA Association has defined its mission as follows

MISSION STATEMENT

To empower and to promote the development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community through education and the leadership development of its youth

The ASPIRA Association will enhance the Puerto Rican and Latino community by developing and nurturing the leadership, intellectual, and cultural potential of its youth so that they may contribute their skills and dedication to the fullest development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community everywhere

GOALS OF THE ASPIRA ASSOCIATION

ASPIRA, as a movement organized in six states and Puerto Rico, with deep roots in these communities, is unified in its commitment to a common set of primary Association goals to meet its mission. The overriding theme of these goals, based on the Association's mission, is the empowerment and development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community through educational excellence and leadership development of youth.

The goals of the ASPIRA Association provide the basic framework for all the programs and activities of each member of the ASPIRA family. To achieve these general goals, each Associate plans and implements programs and activities that are appropriate to the conditions, needs, and resources in each of the communities they serve.

These Goals are

- To develop the leadership potential of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth by encouraging them to become aware of the socio-economic and political conditions, needs, and potential of their community, and by fostering a commitment to dedicate their full talents and skills towards the further development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community
- To motivate, orient and assist Puerto Rican and other Latino youth in their personal, intellectual, cultural, and educational development, through a) the provision of extensive academic and career counseling, b) high quality in-school and after-school educational programs, c) leadership skills development, and d) family and community involvement
- To increase access of Puerto Rican and Latino youth to quality education and leadership development, through educational and policy research, national and local demonstration programs, and local, state and national advocacy

Objectives and Initiatives: 1998 – 2003

Five Major Initiatives: Entrepreneurship, ASPIRA Schools, ASPIRA Alumni, Strategic Communications and Technology; Funding and Financial Stability; and Organizational Development

Over the next five years, ASPIRA's efforts will be directed at

- strengthening and expanding, where possible- those programs and services that continue to meet the ASPIRA's goals and strategic objectives, and that have proven effective,
- enhancing ASPIRA's advocacy on behalf of youth and our communities, existing initiatives that have proven to be effective and that continue to meet ASPIRA's goals and objectives, and
- developing new major initiatives

ASPIRA will develop six new major initiatives over the next five years. These will be overriding themes in the strategic development of the Association and of the ASPIRA Associates and a major focus of its activity. These initiatives are

- **A New Leadership Initiative: Entrepreneurship in the Puerto Rican and Latino Community – Youth Entrepreneurship and Organizational Self-Sufficiency;**
- **Establishment/Expansion and Strengthening of ASPIRA Schools/Educational Institutions;**
- **Development of ASPIRA Alumni Associations;**
- **Strategic Communications, Positioning, Visibility and Communications Technology Initiative;**
- **Strategic Organizational Development Through Professional Development, Systems Enhancement and Technology; and**
- **Increased Funding and Financial Stability**

These major initiatives and the strengthening of current programs -especially of core programs such as public policy leadership development and the ASPIRA Clubs, counseling, academic programs, family involvement, and advocacy, as well as the major initiatives- will involve significant developments in the area of **fund-raising**. In fund-

raising, ASPIRA will expand its income to deliver programs and services and for operating support by

- expanding foundation and government sources,
- increasing corporate support for program and general operations
- moving forcefully into **individual giving**, and
- generating income through internal entrepreneurship (development of businesses)

A New Leadership Initiative: Entrepreneurship in the Puerto Rican and Latino Community – Youth Entrepreneurship and Organizational Self-Sufficiency

ASPIRA is committed to the development of a *New Leadership* in the Puerto Rican community. This is a new type of leadership that, through its entrepreneurship, can generate wealth within the community, that will reinvest in the community to foster the economic and social development of the community. It is also a new type of leadership in our organizations. ASPIRA is committed to developing leaders of our community organizations including ASPIRA- that will lead their organizations to self-sufficiency through social entrepreneurship.

This new initiative, spearheaded by ASPIRA founder, Dr. Antonia Pantoja, was launched at the 1997 ASPIRA National Conference.

General Objective

The overall goal of this initiative is to promote the economic development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community through the development of a new entrepreneurial leadership in the Puerto Rican and Latino community -that is motivated and prepared to develop wealth in the community and to invest this wealth in, and for the benefit of, the community- beginning with the development of young Puerto Rican and Latino entrepreneurial leaders.

Strategies and Activities

The New Leadership Initiative will involve programs and services that each ASPIRA Associate (and the National Office) will develop -based on their resources, priorities and special conditions- in two areas:

Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Development - ASPIRA will develop programs and services to provide Puerto Rican and other Latino youth with the motivation, skills and tools to become socially responsible entrepreneurs, committed to the economic development of their communities. These will include programs to

- expose youth to entrepreneurship, Latino entrepreneurs and to corporate environments,
- train youth on entrepreneurship, providing entrepreneurial skills,
- mentoring programs with successful entrepreneurs,
- programs to provide youth with seed capital to start their own business, and
- develop partnerships with post-secondary education institutions to increase the number of Puerto Rican and Latino youth obtaining academic degrees in areas related to economic development

ASPIRA will develop collaborations with local, state and national organizations, such as Latino youth entrepreneurship programs, Youth Ventures, Inroads, and Junior Achievement to a) jointly revise, develop and implement youth entrepreneurship training curricula for *ASPIRANTES*, b) seek sources of seed capital for youth, and c) place youth with entrepreneur mentors

These programs may be developed as new initiatives, operated through the ASPIRA Clubs, or operated in ASPIRA schools

Social Entrepreneurship ASPIRA will develop income-generating activities (businesses) to achieve financial self-sufficiency. These initiatives may include

- marketing of ASPIRA products and services,
- production and marketing of new products and services,
- operating businesses as a non-profit organization, and
- development of for-profit ventures

ASPIRA will also develop a social entrepreneurship leadership program to develop cadres of social entrepreneurs within ASPIRA first, and later, among other non-profit Latino organizations in the communities served by ASPIRA. This initiative will be geared at developing a new non-profit entrepreneurial leadership who can develop entrepreneurial initiatives for their organizations

This new leadership initiative at ASPIRA is not intended to supplant ASPIRA's historical commitment to develop leaders among our youth in areas of public policy, education, and community service. Rather, it will supplement and expand ASPIRA's leadership development focus.

Establishment/Expansion and Strengthening of ASPIRA Schools/Educational Institutions

Within the context, mission, priorities and resources of each ASPIRA Associate, ASPIRA will move forcefully in the area of operating formal regular, alternative and Charter schools or post-secondary institutions. Operating schools is not new for

ASPIRA ASPIRA of Illinois has operated an alternative school for over a decade and ASPIRA of Florida has operated an alternative school for several years. However, as a major focus of development for the Association, this is a new movement within ASPIRA.

This movement both in strengthening existing schools and starting new ones will be very much determined by the school reform movement on the one hand, and the major attacks on education equity (i.e., bilingual education, affirmative action, language rights, and school financing) on the other.

General Objective

The overall objective of ASPIRA's school initiative—and of its schools—is that every student in an ASPIRA school will: a) attain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet high academic standards that will enable them to successfully advance in the studies, b) develop their leadership potential to the fullest and be committed to service to their community, and c) be aware, knowledgeable, and proud of their Puerto Rican and Latino heritage.

Strategies and Activities

ASPIRA will,

- a) strengthen and expand (if feasible) current ASPIRA schools in Illinois and Florida, either through expanded enrollments or establishment of new school sites,
- b) support the development of new schools in New York and Pennsylvania, and,
- c) where viable, organize new schools (under various arrangements) in other cities.

The overriding focus of this initiative will be to reach larger numbers of Puerto Rican and Latino students, and to ensure that *all* students at ASPIRA schools meet the new high academic standards that are being required across the country through a) rigorous course-work, b) access to high quality teachers and instructional practices, c) access to high quality educational resources, including computers and other technologies, d) extensive parental/family involvement, and e) motivational after-school enrichment activities.

One other factor in the development of ASPIRA's schools that is critical and unique to ASPIRA is the *ASPIRA Process*. ASPIRA is committed to utilize and integrate the *ASPIRA Process* throughout the educational experience.

The ASPIRA School initiatives will focus on exposing all students extensively to technology and infusing technology as an instructional tool throughout the curriculum.

A significant part of this initiative will be to further enhance ASPIRA's capacity to document and systematically evaluate the progress of their schools. This will require establishment of sound management information systems and on-going school monitoring and evaluation. ASPIRA will also increase efforts to disseminate information about ASPIRA schools to enhance their visibility nationally, through ASPIRA's communications initiative (see below).

ASPIRA will support the strengthening and expansion (if feasible) of the Alternative schools operated by ASPIRA of Illinois and ASPIRA of Florida. ASPIRA will also support the development of new schools already being established by ASPIRA of Pennsylvania (Charter) and ASPIRA of New York (regular). ASPIRA will also encourage and support other Associates to explore the feasibility of establishing schools in their states and will move towards developing these schools. ASPIRA will engage in the following activities over the next five years:

- extensive exchange of information and expertise among the Associate offices and among the schools themselves, including on-going exchanges of teachers and administrators,
- revision, development and exchange of curriculum and curriculum materials,
- extensive, on-going professional development of ASPIRA teachers on standards, curricula, leadership development, the ASPIRA Process, and new instructional strategies, including extensive training on the use of technology,
- on-going exchange of information among teachers, counselors and administrators of all the Associates through Association wide technology,
- focusing of current and new out-of-school enrichment programs on the school populations,
- identification of sources of support for the schools, with a special emphasis on funding for facilities and technology,
- exchange of information on school management and on-going professional development of school administrators,
- development and exchange of model, documentation and evaluation designs and management information systems

Each Associate engaged in the strengthening, expansion or development of new schools will carry out these activities based on their local environments, needs, priorities and interests. Therefore, for example, these schools may have special themes, such as public policy, entrepreneurship, community service, mathematics and science or others. ASPIRA will support these initiatives. In addition, it will build a body of documentation and evaluation of these initiatives so they can be shared within and outside (where appropriate) the Association.

Development of ASPIRA Alumni Associations

ASPIRA will move to develop the ASPIRA Alumni Association as a means of involving *ASPIRANTE Alumni* with ASPIRA and with youth leadership development and in community service, enhancing awareness of ASPIRA nationally, and developing a constituency for individual giving to ASPIRA.

General Objective

The overall objective of this initiative is to involve Alumni with ASPIRA, promote their service to the community, utilize their capacity (political, social and economic) to advocate for Puerto Rican and Latino youth and for education, and to serve as a source for individual support for ASPIRA.

Strategies and Activities

ASPIRA will support, follow and review the progress of a pilot ASPIRA Alumni Association in ASPIRA of New York, and will move to support those Associates interested in replicating this model. ASPIRA will also structure a national task force to develop specific plans for support of the Associates developing Alumni Associations and for designing strategies for developing a possible national alumni association.

Strategic Communications and Technology Initiative

ASPIRA will place major emphasis on developing its internal and external communications and the use of technology as a major means of communication. The objective of enhancing internal communications through technology will be to: a) expose *ASPIRANTES* to technology (and communications through technology) and to make every *ASPIRANTE* computer literate, b) establish and maintain on-going communications among *ASPIRANTES* nationally, c) extend access to computer communications technology into the community, d) improve programs and advocacy through the on-going exchange of information, materials and ideas and e) enhance ASPIRA's management through on-going, technology-based communications and exchange of information.

General Objective

The overall objective of the external communications initiative will be to increase ASPIRA's visibility, as well as the visibility of its programs, at the national, state and local levels. This will include increasing ASPIRA's visibility among Puerto Rican and Latino youth, parents/families and community members, schools and school systems, local and state government, current and potential funders, other organizations and the general community.

Strategies and Activities

Aware of the critical importance of both internal and external communications, ASPIRA will, over the next five years,

Internal Communications

- conduct an extensive review of current communications objectives, activities, processes and technologies within the Association,
- develop an internal communications plan that will include strategies, systems and procedures to improve internal communications within the Association,
- significantly increase the number of computers and access to Internet resources throughout the Association, and
- develop a technology-based internal communications system, beginning with the ASPIRA Intranet, that will electronically link all the ASPIRA offices and sites

External Communications

- develop an Association-wide strategic National Communication Plan that will
 - identify current communications activities and capabilities,
 - identify and define key ASPIRA audiences nationally and locally,
 - identify and prioritize communications strategies for each audience, including a media plan,
 - identify resources for national and local communications
- increase the number, variety, quality, targeting and distribution of ASPIRA publications in all areas, ensuring that each Associate produces at least one quarterly newsletter,
- developing technology-based communications, including CD-ROM, an integrated ASPIRA Internet World Wide Web Site and web sites/pages for each Associate

Strategic Organizational Development Through Professional Development, Systems Enhancement and Technology

ASPIRA recognizes the critical importance of effective management and financial controls systems to ensure organizational stability and accountability to the community and external funding sources. It also recognizes that in general, the organization faces extensive challenges in its operations that range from the lack of adequate accounting systems, budget controls systems, personnel policies and benefits, effective investment practices, and management systems. It also recognizes that adopting effective management and finance policies and practices, technology and training at all levels – from Boards of Directors to program staff- are two key to effective operations

General Objective

The overall objective of this initiative is to ensure ASPIRA's financial stability and maximum management efficiency through the application of state of the art management systems and procedures, including the systematic application of technology, and extensive collaboration within the organization.

Strategies and Activities

Over the next five years, ASPIRA will develop a major initiative to develop its management and financial infrastructure. This initiative will include

- a) extensive review of current management operations,
- b) development of effective management systems,
- c) development of effective financial systems (accounting, investment)
- d) extensive and on-going professional development of program management staff, and
- e) intensive use of technology in management and finance.

Among the initiatives that ASPIRA will undertake are

- extensive exchange of information and expertise among the ASPIRA organizations on management and finance issues,
- intensive training of members of Associate boards of directors in such areas as the role of boards in non-profits, fiduciary responsibility programs and policy issues, finances and accounting, and audits,
- to seek external expertise to provide support to the development effort,
- development of written administrative and accounting procedures for all Associates,
- to explore ways of providing all staff with competitive benefits (such as health and pension plans), to secure financial, accounting, audit, and other management services, and to reduce costs of purchasing goods and services through cooperative procurement,
- extensive training of program and other administrative staff on program management, budgeting and budget control,
- completion of the project to mechanize accounting throughout the organization, and
- development of management information systems throughout the Association

A major part of this effort will be the move to significantly enhance the use of technology for management. This will include computerizing accounting and management procedures and use of the ASPIRA Intranet for data and financial information exchange, where appropriate. ASPIRA will promote the exchange of

information throughout ASPIRA so that each office can learn from, and build on, the management infrastructure of the others.

Increased Funding and Financial Stability

Funding is always a major concern for non-profit organizations and is no less so for ASPIRA. Over the next five years, ASPIRA will move in several strategic directions in funding. Critical to this initiative will be to build on the purchasing power of the Latino community and on ASPIRA's role as the voice representing this community in youth leadership and education, to secure increased Corporate support.

General Objective

The overall objective of this initiative is to ensure the financial stability and viability of all ASPIRA organizations by expanding and diversifying its funding base, including a movement towards individual giving, increasing the proportion of unrestricted funding, and social entrepreneurship within the Association.

Strategies and Activities

ASPIRA will develop its overall capacity to: a) identify government, foundation and corporate sources of support (funding and other resources) within and outside the community through prospect research using technology and other means, b) develop effective program designs for submission to funders, including writing effective proposals, c) develop fund-raising skills to seek and secure unrestricted funding, d) organize effective fund-raising events and activities, e) communicate effectively with funders about ASPIRA and ASPIRA programs and services, f) develop a sizable individual donor base, and g) develop entrepreneurial projects that will generate unrestricted funding for the organization.

Some of the activities ASPIRA will engage in over the next five years include

- expansion and on-going staff professional development and training on funding research and funding information management, proposal-writing, fund-raising activities, communication with potential funders,
- seeking funding to conduct national and local funding feasibility studies by external firms,
- development of a national ASPIRA funder data-base that will include government, foundations and corporations at the local, state, regional and national levels,
- extensive communications and exchange of information within the Association regarding potential funding sources through use of the ASPIRA Intranet,

- development of communications strategies specifically for funders, within the Association's communications plan, including targeted publications, and periodic updates to funders;
- development of model individual giving databases and training of ASPIRA staff on individual giving, prospect identification and cultivation;
- seek resources in each ASPIRA organization for staff dedicated to fund-raising.

Strengthening and Expanding Current Programs

ASPIRA recognizes the effectiveness of its existing programs and the need to expand and further strengthen these programs so they serve more youth in an effective and efficient manner.

General Objective

The overall objective of ASPIRA's effort regarding existing programs and services will be to significantly expand its services to incorporate increased numbers of youth and to enhance ASPIRA's capacity to deliver effective, efficient, and well-documented programs.

Strategies and Activities

ASPIRA Association proposes to strengthen its programs by:

- strengthening its capacity to review and analyze community needs and the needs of youth through **research** as the basis for the review and evaluation of programs and services through extensive staff training on social and educational research, and through the development of shared research models;
- expanded **training** and professional development of ASPIRA program staff on program design, program management and program evaluation;
- enhancing the capacity of all Associates to **document and evaluate** programs and services to determine the degree to which these are effective in serving youth and the community, including the development of Management Information Systems and systematic evaluation design models.

ASPIRA will also expand its capacity to develop **new** program initiatives. This will involve enhancing the capacity of each Associate to:

- ascertain community and youth needs through systematic research and data collection and analysis;
- develop effective and complete program designs;

- identify sources of program funding; and
- develop effective funding proposals.

Strengthening and Expansion of Advocacy

In a changing environment of education reform and attacks on equity, ASPIRA recognizes that it is a strong national and local voice in advocating for Puerto Rican and Latino youth and that it has a responsibility to remain a force in shaping policies that affect this youth.

General Objective

Over the next five years, the ASPIRA Association proposes to expand its influence in public policy at the national, state and local levels, focusing on three areas of development:

- enhanced capacity to conduct public policy **research** and analysis;
- enhanced **communications** capabilities; and
- development of strategic **partnerships** with other advocacy organizations

Areas of Advocacy

Though there are many policy issues that affect Latino youth and there are significant differences among the states ASPIRA serves regarding the issues that are important because of their potential impact. In general, however, there are two overarching issues that affect Puerto Rican and Latino youth, as well as ASPIRA at all levels. Therefore, ASPIRA will focus on the following policy issues related to education reform and equity at the local, state and national levels.

- Education Reform - the new standards movement; testing; Charter Schools and vouchers, educational technology; teaching workforce; school-to-work; family involvement and advocacy; community service; and technology.
- Equity - school re-segregation; bilingual education; disparities in achievement; access to educational resources; and gangs and violence in schools; access to college; and financing college.

In view of its entrepreneurship initiative, ASPIRA's advocacy efforts will also focus on economic development and entrepreneurship, including access to youth entrepreneurship skills development and to capital.

Moreover, ASPIRA has a traditional and legitimate interest in the areas of health—including access to health care, disease prevention (AIDS, hepatitis, etc.), drug and

alcohol abuse and youth violence. In addition to its program efforts, ASPIRA will continue to focus and expand its research and advocacy efforts in these areas.

Strategies and Activities

ASPIRA will develop the following strategies and activities:

- extensive, on-going training of staff and youth on research and advocacy; and
- expanded communications through technology - establishment of the ASPIRA Intranet for instant computer-based communications between all the ASPIRA Associates, the ASPIRA Internet connections for all ASPIRA Associates (including staff and students) for obtaining information on policy issues and data for research;
- increased publication of policy papers and briefs;
- periodic local, regional and national meetings and seminars on policy issues;
- development of an ASPIRA Web page with a policy forum; and
- extensive development of new strategic partnerships with local and national community-based organizations and advocacy groups on specific policy issues

Monitoring and Evaluation of ASPIRA

There areas in which ASPIRA will work to monitor and evaluate progress towards reaching the proposed objectives:

- **Model Program Monitoring and Evaluation Design:** ASPIRA will develop a model program monitoring and evaluation design to evaluation design for programs that will be used as a guide throughout the Association to develop local, program-specific designs, to generate data on program progress on an on-going basis;
- **ASPIRA Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation Design:** ASPIRA will develop a monitoring and evaluation design to determine, on an on-going basis, progress being made towards achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan. This design will contain specific benchmarks, timeframes, cost considerations and others upon which progress will be followed. This evaluation design will consider both the general framework of the Strategic Plan and the specific plans of the ASPIRA organizations. This design will be made available for use throughout the Association. Each Associate will utilize the design to review their own progress and the National Office will collect the results of Associate evaluations into a national review of the Association's Strategic Plan.

In addition to monitoring our own progress, it seems critical that ASPIRA conduct a national evaluation study of ASPIRA's effectiveness, and the perceptions of ASPIRA within and outside our communities. This study, to be conducted by an independent consulting firm, would review ASPIRA's progress over the past 20 years to ascertain overall outcomes of the organization. Such a study would generate data that will be very useful in self-assessments, planning and in developing an effective communications strategy.

Over the next five years, ASPIRA will seek funding to conduct a national evaluation initiative.